# Levinas NC:

## FWK:

#### The standard is rejecting totalization of the Other. Moral systems must start with a pre-reflexive engagement with the other. My experience of the world demonstrates the limits to my own cognition, so claiming to speak for the other cannot be justified, even conceptually. Blum[[1]](#footnote-1)

The experience of transcendence is, at bottom, the experience of having my interiority brought into question ontologically, epistemologically, and morally. Ontologically, I find that I am not the only possible source of reality. Although I am capable of creating, I experience a presence within the world that so overflows and escapes from my experience that I could not have created it. Epistemologically, I find that my perspective on the world is not the only possible [one] perspective. There is a point of view that I can never occupy, because the only way of defining it relative to my point of view is that it is not mine. Because the Other so radically escapes my cognition, it simultaneously threatens my freedom (to such a degree that I am inclined to murder) and awakens my desire (to such a degree that I am inclined to awe, and even to worship). The Other is at once the mysterium tremendum and the mysterium fascinans. If morality is understood as arising in the context of sociation, then the insight that the limits of my understanding become apparent precisely in this context would seem necessarily to have moral implications. Inasmuch as the Other fundamentally escapes my understanding, the forced totalization of the Other murder, in the extreme case is an imposition of my will for which a justification is, in principle, unavailable. As Levinas puts it, murder is impossible- not physically speaking, of course, but morally speaking (Levinas 1961/1969, 198-99). If I kill someone, it is fundamentally because I wish to be rid of the limits that are imposed by his or her presence. The cognitive and moral limits that are illuminated by the face, however, are not eliminated by removing the face from the purview of sensibility. The infinite distance between myself and the Other, once opened in my experience by the Other's epiphany, will remain open. My responsibility, once illuminated, is seen as a part of what I am. The commandment that was initially inscribed on the face of the Other is now inscribed on the heart of the same.19 "To be an I means . . . not to be able to escape responsibility. . . . The uniqueness of the I is the fact that no one can answer for me"(97).

#### And, outweighs other framework warrants: I deny the empirical belief that the other is like yourself, so they can’t justify the generalization of particular reasons in an ethical context. I contest a critical presupposition of their framework link chain.

#### And, the NC precludes: moral cognition is a mental process, but ideas don’t directly refer directly to anything in external world. Totalization severs the link between your idea and an external person, so it could not be endorsed by an ethical theory. Beavers[[2]](#footnote-2)

If we can accept this notion that ideas are inventions of the mind, that ideas are, when it comes down to it, only interpretations of something, and if ethics, in fact, is taken to refer to real other persons who exist apart from my interpretations, then we are up against a problem: there is no way in which ideas, on the current model, refer to independently existing other persons, and as such, ideas cannot be used to found an ethics. There can be no pure practical reason until after contact with the other is established. Given this view towards ideas, then, anytime I take the person in my idea to be the real person, I have closed off contact with the real person; I have cut off the connection with the other that is necessary if ethics is to refer to real other people. This is a central violence to the other that denies the other his/her own autonomy. Levinas calls this violence "totalization" and it occurs whenever I limit the other to a set of rational categories, be they racial, sexual, or otherwise. Indeed, it occurs whenever I already know what the other is about before the other has spoken. That is, it is the inscription of the other in the same. If ethics presupposes the real other person, then such totalization will, in itself, be unethical.

#### Also means it’s a presupposition of the AC framework, so I don’t need to win that the AC ethical theory is false to preclude, I just need to extend a framework warrant, since their framework is not competitive with mine.

#### Lastly, The state must embrace this unconditional obligation. We must change everything to satisfy our obligation to Other. SIMMONS[[3]](#footnote-3):

So, unconditional hospitality implies that you don't ask the other, the newcomer, the guest, to give anything back, or even to identify himself or herself. Even if the other deprives you of your mastery or your home, you have to accept this. It is terrible to accept this, but that is the condition of unconditional hospitality; that you give up [everything] the mastery of your space, your home, your nation. It is unbearable,. If, however, there is pure hospitality it should be pushed to this -- reme (Derrida, 1999b, 70). **This hospitality,** must be manifest in the political. "The political task then becomes that of finding the best 'legislative transaction, the best 'juridical' conditions so that in a given situation the ethics of hospitality should not be violated in principle—and should be respected as much as possible. For this, it is necessary to change laws, habits, phantasms, an entire 'culture" (Derrida, 1998, 149). We must do everything precisely so that the laws of hospitality are written into positive law. When this is impossible, everyone should, in soul and conscience, occasionally in a private manner, judge what must be done (when, where, how, to what -- ent) without the laws or against the laws" (Derrida, 1998, 150). Ethics to Politics: The Third Levinas's philosophy champions the ethical relationship with the Other, but this is not the end of his philosophy. Levinas worries that the ego can become infatuated with the Other to the point of ignoring all others. This embrace of lovers, as Levinas calls it, is interrupted by the simultaneous appearance of another person, "the Third" (le tiers) who also demands an infinite and concrete hospitality. If the ego is confronted with one Other, then ethics is straightforward: the ego is infinitely, and concretely responsible for the Other. However, with the appearance of the Third, the ego's attention is divided: a host of new questions arise. Are both others the Other? How can the ego be infinitely responsible for more than one Other? Which Other should receive its attention first? What if one Other makes war on the other Other? Can the ego defend the Other against attacks from an-Other? If so, can the ego use violence, even kill an-Other in defense of the Other? Levinas, in an infamous interview, said If your neighbour attacks another neighbour or treats him unjustly, what can you do? Then alterity takes on another character, in alterity we can find an enemy, or at least we are faced with the problem of knowing who is right, and who is wrong, who is just and who is unjust. There are people who are wrong (Levinas, 1989). The Third necessitates an extension of the ego's an-archical responsibility into the realm of the said, that is, [this] responsibility must be made concrete in language, justice, and politics. The decisions that must be made between Others, leads to the famous weighing on the scales of justice. Further, with the appearance of the Third, the ego can no longer prioritize those in proximity, it must give attention to all Others. However, it is impossible to have a face-to-face relationship with each member of humanity. Those far away can only be reached indirectly through social and political institutions. Notice that the raison d’etre / reason for being for politics and justice is ethics. And Levinas believes that the modern liberal state can best actualize the ethical. The liberal state, according to Levinas, is always trying to improve itself, trying to be more just, or, in Derrida’s terms, it is “a Democracy-to-Come”. To summarize Levinas' and Derrida’s thought; since "it is impossible to escape the State," they insist that the state be made as ethical as possible. The world of institutions and justice must be held in check by the anarchical responsibility for the Other. Alongside the an-archical responsibility for the Other there is a place for the realm of the said, which includes ontology, justice, and politics. Levinas calls for both the saying and the said, ethics and politics, and anti-foundationalism and justice.

## Offense:

#### 1. Taking away people’s right to own a gun is totalizing – it imposes a set of values on the Other and doesn’t respect their nature as infinitely distant from your perspective. Ropeik

(David Ropeik, Big Think, “The Gun Control Battle Isn’t About Guns As Weapons”)

More importantly, and more relevant to the argument over gun control, fighting for the right to own a gun is a way of asserting control against a society that many feel is encroaching on their values and freedoms. Millions of people with such feelings want guns less to protect themselves against physical danger and more to protect themselves from the threat of a society they feel is taking away their ability to control their own lives. That deeper loss of control fuels the disproportionately intense passion of gun rights advocates and explains what *The New Yorker* calls the ”conspicuous asymmetry of fervor” that energizes 4 million members of the National Rifle Association to effectively determine gun control policy for a country of 310 million.

#### 2. A mandatory framework like a ban doesn’t leave room for real responsibility to the Other. Mansell[[4]](#footnote-4)

The more flexible a set of rules can be, such as the voluntary codes and principles used by business, the more chance will exist for aligning these rules with a sense of responsibility for the Other. This requirement for flexibility is explained by Levinas’s argument that our responsibility for the Other can never be set along one fixed dimension. So, paradoxically perhaps, whilst the sort of ethical codes used by business can serve as an escape from real responsibility, they can at the same time (through their flexible and voluntary nature) offer the possibility for a degree of alignment with responsibility that a mandatory framework cannot capture. Directors have, under the UK Combined Code of 2003 (which I mention only as an example) the choice to comply with the principles in the code, or explain why they have deviated from them. Likewise, an employee who is supposedly subject to the ‘ethical code’ of the business will almost always have room for a flexible interpretation of what this means in any given context, and be able to apply what Aristotle (1980) calls ‘practical wisdom’. There is a chance that in the space left open by this flexibility, principles can be adhered to that do reflect a genuine openness of responsibility.

#### 3. The notion of gun control and anti-violence policies constructs the Other as a threat since it must mirror the hostility of the self to protect itself. The idea that we need to protect ourselves from people with handguns is totalizing since it constructs them as an enemy.

Wendt ‘99 (Alexander, Ralph D. Mershon Professor of International Security at the Ohio State University, “Social Theory of International Politics”, pg. 261-266)

What Realism-as-description shows is that **when the Other is an enemy the Self is forced to mirror[s] back the representations it has attributed to the Other.** Thus, unlike most roles in social life, which are constituted by functionally differentiated "counter"-roles ([i.e.] teacher-student, master-slave, patron-client), **the role of enemy is symmetric, constituted by actors being in the same position simultaneously. Self mirrors Other, becomes its enemy, in order to survive.** This of course will confirm **[Confirming] whatever hostile intentions the Other had attributed to the Self, forcing it to engage in realpolitik of its own, which** will in turn **reinforce[s] the Self's perception of the Other, and so on. Realpolitik[‘s]**, in short, is a self-fulfilling prophecy: its **beliefs generate actions that confirm those beliefs.** This is not to say that realpolitik is the sole cause of conflict, such that in its absence states would be friends since if states really do want to conquer each other then realpolitik is as much an effect as cause. The point is that [**whether or not states are existential threats** to each other **is** in one sense **not relevant, since a logic of enmity gets started states will behave in ways that make them existential threats,** and thus the **behavior itself becomes part of the problem.** This gives enemy-images a homeostatic quality that sustains the logic of Hobbesian anarchy.]

# First Phil Fwk:

#### Ethics must be first philosophy. We must recognize the content and force of our obligations prior to any other philosophic and intellectual enterprise. Ethics does not depend upon some sort of antecedent deduction from external principles, but is a self-evident authoritative framework.

#### There are three warrants: 1. Engaging in any academic discipline presupposes we should be engaging in it. We have reason to study epistemology, or reason to study the field in a particular way. However, to have that reason is already to presuppose the realm of the ethical. Thus, any philosophic movement already presupposes the nature of ethical commitments for instance the Enlightenment value of absolute truth. This means some methodological value exists non-methodologically.

#### 2. It is impossible to derive an imperative from an indicative. For example, the fact that I have an impulse or that something will kill me cannot itself provide moral reason unless we already attach a normative precept – like that I ought to listen to the impulse for some reason, or that my death would be bad. This is inescapable; either you make an irreducibly normative judgment somewhere or the conclusion remains merely indicative. This means that ethics cannot lie on any other non-ethical foundation – the idea of being able to use the world to explain ethics is contradictory.

#### The conclusion is that ethics must begins in the first confrontation with the other prior to any philosophical systematization. Because ethics is first philsophy, it cannot be mediated by any conceptual categorization. All totalization does this. When you sort people into categories or treat people differently based on those categories then your ethical obligation is not first, because you understand its content in a mediated fashion. Totalization cannot give rise to our obligations because our obligations had to be plain prior to the totalization; if my totalization results in treating you at all differently, I must be inconsistent with my obligation because my obligation was full and evident to myself before the totalization occurred.

1. Blum, Peter C. "Overcoming Relativism? Levinas's Return to Platonism." Journal of Religious Ethics 28.1 (2000): 91-117. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Beavers, Anthony. "Introducing Levinas to undergraduate philosophers." Colloquy paper, Undergraduate Philosophy Association, University of Texas. Austin (1990). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. [“Toward A Postmodern Anti-Foundational Foundation for Human Rights”; P. 13-15//] [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Mansell, Samuel. "Proximity and Rationalisation: Reflections on the Limits of a Levinasian Ethics in the context of Corporate Governance." [↑](#footnote-ref-4)